

Running the Right Risk

Innovative hospitality that pays off



Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour at night



Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour

When Starwood Hotels and Resorts development visited Atlific Hotels' newest hotel during its construction, it made a lasting impression. They were pleased to see such a unique hotel—it was the type of urban redevelopment project typically only seen in Europe. Canada now boasts a prime example of that type of project, as Le Westin Montréal opened its doors in May.

Standout projects like Le Westin Montréal are what have given Atlific Hotels the edge over its competition for the past 50 years. The company manages or owns 43 hotels across Canada. Alongside its innovation and ability to take risks, it's one of the country's most dynamic hotel management companies.

Besides hotel management, the company excels at a range of skills. Atlific Hotels' team assists with franchise and site selection, business plan development, hotel and market evaluation, operational management, financial administration, sales and marketing, food and beverage, construction management and human resources. Including Starwood, the company manages most of the world's most popular brands like Marriott and Holiday Inn.

While handling the day-to-day hotel management concerns and improving each hotel's performance, the company adheres to four core values. The first is integrity, ensuring Atlific Hotels acts ethically and with honesty. The second is respect, which includes respect for the company's work environments, associates, hotels and guests. Loyalty is the third value, evident in the long-lasting relationships Atlific Hotels forms. Last but not least is family—a family atmosphere permeates the company's internal and external operations.

"What really sets us apart is our equal mixture of ownership and pure management," says Philippe Gadbois, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Atlific Hotels. "Although we do manage every property, we are not singularly guided by pure management—we are owners of some projects. That allows us to bring an ownership perspective to our day-to-day management activities."

FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING

Founded in 1959, Atlific Hotels was a risk-taker from the very beginning. "When we started, we were one of the two franchisees that brought the Holiday Inn brand to Canada," says Gadbois.

That first Holiday Inn was the franchise's standard roadside design, but it led Atlific Hotels to build another. Not long after it finished its first hotel, Atlific Hotels decided to build a Holiday Inn in downtown Montreal.

"It became the brand's first hotel in a city center," explains Gadbois. "With 500 rooms, it was by far the largest in the world."

The innovations kept coming, year after year, some unexpectedly. "A few years later, we brought the Wendy's hamburger franchise to Canada," says Gadbois. "It's not directly related to hotels, but it's directly related to food and beverage activities, so we went ahead and launched that business."

In 1997, Atlific Hotels became an affiliate of Ocean Properties, Ltd. Hotels and Resorts—one of the largest privately held hotel operations and development companies in North America. Its portfolio is as diverse as Atlific Hotels' projects.

LE WESTIN MONTRÉAL

In mid-May the unique and historic Le Westin Montréal in downtown Montreal opened for business. Whereas many historic projects are created from a single historic property, this one is blossoming out of three.

Two of the three buildings date back to the 18th century. The third, however, was operational just decades ago. An art deco-style building, it was the home of The Montreal Gazette's offices and printing plant.

"The property is a little eclectic at best," says Gadbois.

The three buildings were owned by the City of Montreal and went to public tender three years ago. As the successful bidder, Atlific Hotels has to maintain some aspects of the historic property. For example, the façade of each building is protected.

"We added a fourth, modern tower and linked all four of the buildings together," explains Gadbois. "We own this hotel and it is the largest



financial endeavor our company has ever undertaken in Canada or the United States. Opening day was a proud moment for everyone.”

Le Westin Montréal features 454 rooms with 47 suites. Executive level rooms are also available. Amenities abound with swimming pools, concierge service, a bar and lounge, a restaurant at street level and a covered entrance with valet parking. There is also a 7,700-square-foot grand ballroom with 20-foot-high ceilings. A full-service spa and health club will open later this year.

Green components were heavily emphasized in the hotel. Fabrics are made from recycled fibers while air and water are recirculated.

“Needless to say, for anything that is being built these days, dedication to environmental considerations is important—it’s not a passing fancy and thankfully green policies will be around forever,” says Gadbois. “We’re green for many reasons, including the financial rewards and because our customers demand it.”

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Le Westin Montréal is joining good company with Atlific Hotels’ portfolio of hotels, and there will be many more to come.

“The economy in Canada is nowhere near as dramatically affected as in the United States. There’s a tendency to think that what is happening there is being replicated everywhere, but it’s not as bad—yet it can still be challenging,” says Gadbois. “Even though hotel and commercial projects are better leveraged in Canada, there’s a tendency for hoteliers to try to beat each other to a pulp by reducing rates when there’s a slowdown.”

Atlific Hotels avoids the trend of reducing rates and the competitive feeling currently swelling among hoteliers. “That’s just not a strategy we particularly espouse, because then it takes that much longer to get rates back up after the upturn,” says Gadbois.

The eventual upswing is something Atlific Hotels is ideally positioned for. “Growth continues to be very much on the agenda,” declares Gadbois. “A typical company objective is growing by three or four hotels per year, which would mean that in five years we will have added approximately 50 percent more inventory—and we’ll feel pretty good about that if we achieve it.”

No matter how many hotels Atlific Hotels picks up in coming years, there’s no doubt they will be innovative and worth the risks. 🧑‍🔧

GEIGER AND HUOT ARCHITECTS

Geiger and Huot Architects is a Montreal-based architecture and interior design firm whose reputation is gaining momentum throughout North America thanks to projects like the Westin Montréal. Providing a full range of architectural services, we value our relationship with Atlific Hotels and are proud to be associated with their continued success in hotel development.

GeigerHuot

GeigerHuot
architectes

P 514.935.3338

F 514.935.3375

3745 Ouest Rue Saint-Jacques
Suite 210, Montreal, QC H4C 1H3

